

**Opening Statement of Henry J. Hyde
Full Committee Hearing entitled,
“Afghanistan: Five Years After 9/11”
Wednesday, 9/20/06 at 10:30 a.m.**

The Committee will come to order.

Five years ago, the United States experienced a terrible tragedy that led our nation to destroy the Taliban safe haven in Afghanistan protecting Osama Bin Laden and his al-Qaeda movement. Our mission was to provide a safe, stable, and secure Afghanistan free from the threat of international terrorism or as a base for global terrorists.

Despite significant political achievements, nearly five years later, the window of opportunity in Afghanistan is imperiled. A 60 percent increase in illicit opium cultivation is producing over 90 percent of the world's supply of heroin. The revenues are financing and strengthening the Taliban and anti-Coalition activity,

increasing crime and corruption, and eroding the authority of central governing institutions.

Afghanistan is on the brink of becoming a failed state, and the retrained Taliban are showing their strength in new attacks that appear to be influenced by a spiraling Iraqi insurgency. The recent assassination of a governor committed to peace, and the recent attack near the American Embassy aimed at a U.S. convoy, reaffirm the serious challenges to establishing security throughout the country.

Reinforcing the democratic successes in Afghanistan is critical to supporting its national reconciliation process and rebuilding a viable and independent nation-state that is secure and free from terrorism. *The 9/11 Commission Report* confirmed this viewpoint in its recommendations. How effective have the United States and the international community been in helping Afghanistan meet this goal?

The War on Terror must be comprehensive. In Afghanistan, it requires an expansion of U.S. and other coalition forces in remote areas, an effective, unified counternarcotics, counterterrorism strategy, and an Afghan government committed to reducing corruption. Only with this comprehensive approach will we accelerate reconstruction on the ground, improve the quality of life for Afghan citizens, and help win the war against the Taliban. The U.S. Commanding Officer in Afghanistan, General Eikenberry, emphasized the link between reconstruction and violence, observing that, “[W]herever the roads end, that’s where the Taliban starts.”

Nonetheless, despite the worst upsurge in violence, NATO has failed to respond to General James L. Jones’s request to increase the deployment of troops from alliance nations.

In the absence of a fully trained Afghan National Army and police force, and an adequate number of coalition forces in the South to combat the Taliban, President Karzai is rearming militias. This is a dangerous path that seriously jeopardizes the ability of the central government to exert its authority in the South, engendering an opportunity for Taliban control.

The Afghan Government needs to be more accountable to its citizens and work to sustain the progress made thus far. The National Assembly has the potential to increase stability in the country by drawing support to central governing institutions. However, the absence of political parties contributes to the slow pace of the legislature. Furthermore, the inability to form political blocs in support of a national agenda leaves room for corruption as unlikely alliances are formed.

President Karzai has shown courage in leading his people under challenging circumstances. I hope that President Karzai will be strong and hold corrupt officials accountable for their actions.

Congress has given the Administration the tools it needs to succeed in Afghanistan. The new PATRIOT Act “narco-terrorism” provision I authored to punish drug trafficking in support of terrorism tightens the scope of the War on Terror by going after the major drug lords, not the poor farmers.

Today we will hear from Antonio Maria Costa, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) about how NATO can expand its mandate. Mr. Costa asked the 26 NATO states to give their forces “the mandate and the resources” to “destroy heroin laboratories, dismantle opium marketplaces, attack

convoys that transport opium and bring the major dealers to justice.” I fully concur with Mr. Costa’s findings.

We will also hear from the Colombian National Police team that traveled 10,000 miles to Afghanistan to lend its support in combating powerful drug lords. We thank our Colombian friends and allies for making this trip and look forward to hearing their recommendations.

Dr. Barnett Rubin recently traveled to Afghanistan and we are fortunate to have his firsthand insights into the increasing threats and challenges to Afghanistan.

Without objection, I submit a letter that Representative Kirk and I recently sent to President Bush on Afghanistan for inclusion in the record.

I yield to my colleague and friend, Ranking Democratic Member Tom Lantos, for any opening remarks he may wish to make.

Mr. Lantos.